

# First Impressions

Compiled Report Form



**Community Visited:** Girard

**Date(s) Visited:**

- a) 11-11-20 Wednesday
- b) 10-30-20 Friday
- c) 11-11-20 Wednesday
- d) 11-13-20 Friday

## 1. Pre-visit web search:

**How easy was it to get information on the community you were visiting? Did it accurately reflect what you saw? Did you have difficulties obtaining information on the community through a web search?**

- a. Girard's website had good information on services in their community. I was able to find information about their emergency services, schools, community organizations and city offices. On the site there is a link to the Chamber of Commerce. The information on the Chamber page could definitely use some updating as it was last updated in 2018. Girard has really cool businesses in their town, and the Chamber page is a good place to let outsiders know about them. The Facebook page and Crawford County Events page does a good job of informing of community events.
- b. The information was very accessible on websites, Facebook pages etc. I was able to get more than enough information and all information fit the product observed.
- c. The website had lots of information (liked the link the school and hospital), however the style of the site had a very unpolished look. The font type and size changed several times on the same page, even sometimes in the same paragraph.
- d. My google search of Girard area Chamber of Commerce provided me with a good background and knowledge of the Community. I was amazed at the beauty of the Courthouse and felt more emphasis should be put on its history. Information was readily available and easy to find.

## 2. The “Five-Minute” Impression:

**After taking a five-minute drive through the community without stopping, the following reactions were noted. The following observations were noted when entering the community from major entrances (signs, streetscapes, buildings, etc.)**

- a. We entered the town from the west and drove straight thru town to the east. Upon entering Girard, we had a very good 1<sup>st</sup> Impression, especially of the west side of town. The town from this view was very clean and well organized, and we could identify several businesses that would be helpful if we were moving to the community. On this route we were able to identify an activity center, gas stations, hospital and the school. We also went thru town from south to north. The south entrance to town did not have the same appeal as the west. It was just less welcoming and not as clean. Upon entering Girard, we could see the buildings were all updated and in good condition. There were signs identifying the town, and welcoming visitors.
- b. The entrances on all 4 highways entrances were clean and inviting. We all have a few eyesores, but the overall impression is positive. Limited promotion on south end of town, just state sign announcing the city, maybe some lighted city signs expressing the themes of the city on all entries. I would remove the club signs by the northeast corner of jail on Highway 47. Street signage has been improved in areas and looks great, assume those variety of signs will be expanded. Buildings and homes seemed to be in good repair. Liked the streetscape throughout courthouse square. Like your small signs pointing out parks, sports complex, and public library.
- c. We entered the town on Summit from the west and were impressed with the town. The gas stations on the corner of Summit and Saint John appeared to be fairly new. The schools and hospital were very easy to find. Some of the building and homes on the south entrance were run down and gave a less favorable impression than when entering from the north, east and west. The street signs were in good shape and easy to read. The high school, gas stations, hospital and several of the shops were on the main roads through town, making everything very easy to find. As I said earlier, the south entrance was run down and several of the buildings/homes appeared either abandoned or uncared for.
- d. The welcome signs are very impressive but a little small. At highway speed, I totally missed the sign the first time into town. They are hard to read, but have been designed very tastefully. Streets were nice and acceptable and the town seemed to be just like any other smaller town, with grass growing up around signs, signs needing attention, and a few homes needing help. This I expected in the private sector. The west civic signs need to be replaced, taken down or attention given. The municipal golf course did not have a sign noticeable to a stranger. It first appeared to resemble the Fairgrounds, but after driving around it was obvious it was the golf course.

### **3. Downtown Business Area**

**Describe the buildings, signs, infrastructure, etc. Explain what type of businesses you observed and give a description of the variety and quality of merchandise displayed. Describe the customer service received when you entered those retail businesses. (Were you greeted? Did you have to ask for assistance?)**

- a. Girard's Downtown was a really neat area and definitely very appealing. We loved the square and the Courthouse. There were beautiful trees at the courthouse that were labeled, which was fun. Most of the buildings had active businesses in them and had good curb appeal. There were a couple spots on the west side of the square that could use some dressing up. We observed a couple of parts stores, The Painted Barrels, Pearls & Curls Boutique, the C4 Coffeehouse & Country Store. There was a good variety of gift items and clothing offered by these stores. The customer service at the places we visited were excellent. Our 1<sup>st</sup> visit was to The Painted Barrels. We were greeted as soon as we entered the door and she visited with us about where we were from and described her booths and the products she had. She also recommended other businesses in the community that we should visit. We also visited the Pearls & Curls Boutique in which we again experienced excellent customer service. Every business we went into made us feel very welcome to the community.
- b. Several of the downtown buildings have been restored, with several needing attention. One large building on southwest corner of square will be renovated soon. The vacant building sites need an ad hoc committee to brainstorm, getting them in different ownership hands. I visited C-4 coffee shop, greeted immediately, nice shop, relaxed atmosphere in back, traditional seating up front. Was disappointed pastries were not made on site. Stopped and bought items at Painted Barrels. Great service and one owner gave me good insight into downtown square area, and promoting and developing downtown. Ate at East Side Café, a working person's restaurant, good food and great service. The other two retail establishments treated me like a potential buyer, didn't have to ask for assistance. Stores were inviting, clean, and well stocked. In my own experience leasing, downtown retail is scattered in with a majority of service business.
- c. There were a wide variety of downtown shops containing boutiques, an auto parts store, restaurants, banks, vision/dental, law offices and accountants. The second hand and appliance store appeared run down or closed, which took away from the professional and trendy look of the other businesses (Pearls and Curls, the Painted Barrel, etc.). The wide variety of businesses in this area would make it easier for a new person to town to find all of the good/services they needed in one place. We visited the visited the coffee house, the diner, Pearls and Curls and the Painted Barrel. In each place the staff was very friendly and proud to show us what all they had to sell. The products appeared to be of high quality. They also all recommended we visit the other after we left their shop, which really shows the camaraderie between the business owners in the area. This really impressed me.
- d. I was very impressed with the merchants. I have to admit we spent the majority of the time in your downtown business area. I thoroughly enjoyed the little jewelry

store/clock repair store, Flea Market and Gifts, Outta Line Designs, Eastside Café, C/4 Coffee, insurance company and the boutiques. They all were very friendly and eager to talk about their community. The hometown pride was evident, with the amount of school spirit clothing that was offered. We received exceptional service and greetings in all the locations we visited. The businesses were busy, and the clerks still acknowledged our presence. Hometown pride was displayed and apparent to visitors.

**What public amenities (drinking fountains, benches, public restrooms, trash receptacles and Wi-Fi, etc.) were available? Comment on landscaping and streetscaping. Did you have difficulty finding parking? Could you access multiple services from where you parked?**

- a. On the Square, there were benches available in several locations as well as trash receptacles. Parking was readily available downtown and we were able to park and walk to all the downtown businesses. The Veteran's Memorial at the Courthouse was neat and the landscaping and appeal of downtown was very good.
- b. The benches and trash cans were nicely spaced. The benches give you a relaxed feeling and a linger longer attitude. Didn't notice public restrooms. The courthouse square looks new and inviting. Liked the planted areas and especially custom Girard benches. Like the rich signage for streets. Seemed to be plenty of parking, went to several places from one parking spot.
- c. When exploring the down town area, there were several benches and trash cans. I did not see a public bathroom or water fountain, but I could have missed them. I really liked the "Girard" benches. Parking in the downtown area was easy to find. Most all parking was street parking, the businesses were close enough together you could walk to all of them after parking in one spot.
- d. I loved the corner landscape, very tasteful and the Girard benches were a very nice touch. We did not see any restrooms just for the public. We were told Wi-Fi was available throughout the community but did not verify it. The landscaping and streetscaping in the town square were top notch. This community should be proud to have such a unique area for a town of their size. The only location we found hard to get around was the north side of the High School. This entire area was a little cramped for the size of the school and all the fields and activities.

#### **4. Other Retail Shopping Areas**

**Describe other retail shopping areas. Were the areas attractive and easy to access?**

- a. A lot of other retail shopping was available on the main road coming into Girard and was easy to access. We were able to find stores for almost any need we would have, and would be easy to find for anyone visiting or new to the community.

- b. The migration of retail from downtown to Highway 47 is apparent trend happening everywhere. Girard being close to Pittsburg, would struggle with retail due to location near all those big box retail establishments.
- c. The other retail areas included the Dollar General, G&W and ACE. These areas were right on the main road so they were easy to find and access. These stores didn't have the trendy updated outsides like some of the downtown stores, but they appeared well kept.
- d. We stopped at the Ace Hardware store to find that it is the only hardware store other than the lumber yard. The gas stations were very accessible and we received good service.

## **5. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas**

**Is there a defined area where manufacturing industries could easily locate/expand? If so, describe.**

- a. I would say there is definitely room to expand Commercial area on the west side of town and the south side of town. It didn't appear that there was a lot of manufacturing industries in the community.
- b. The industrial park looked like it was full. There are numerous manufacturing and printing facilities scattered around downtown, but typically filling available buildings, smart until they have grown enough, to expand into larger facilities. Future will dictate another dedicated industrial park, maybe south.
- c. I struggled to find an industrial area. Some of the buildings on the south side appeared to have at one point been involved in some type of manufacturing, but most looked like they had been repurposed to something else or abandoned.
- d. We looked around where the industrial park should be, but it didn't appear that the property was being utilized much for industry. We found printing companies throughout the town and various other businesses.

## **6. Health Care Services**

**Comment on the availability and apparent quality of hospitals and emergency medical services.**

- a. The hospital and emergency services were very easy to access. The facility had a very good appearance and they offer lots of medical services for the community.
- b. Hospital, clinic, and emergency services were present, and active. Looked to be recently updated and growing with the community. Pharmacy located on 47 with drive-up and plenty of parking.

- c. The hospital and nursing home/assisted living right next to it appeared to be in great condition. I reviewed the hospital's website and it appears they offer a wide range of services, which surprised me for a small town hospital. The hospital exterior was clean and up to date, leading me to believe the inside would be the same.
- d. The hospital appeared to be a hopping place, the parking lot was full, and it was busy.

**Comment on the availability and condition of facilities for physicians, dentists, optometrists, public health and other healthcare providers.**

- a. Girard offers all of these services in their community. Residents have all the health services they need without leaving the community. They seem to also have a lot of specialty physicians that also come to the community. Girard had the Medicalodges Girard for the long-term health services and also have home health service, which is important in all communities.
- b. Hospital, medical clinic, eye doctor, dentists all in great facilities and easily accessed. Pharmacy located on Highway 47 looked new and provided drive up. Lots of competition nearby so looks like local professionals are providing quality basic services.
- c. The West Ridge Assisted living facility looked very nice and up to date. The other nursing home also appeared in good shape, just not as new. The assisted livings proximity to the hospital was also a bonus.
- d. The buildings appeared to be well kept and available to the public. Most the doctors and healthcare providers were from out of town and did not reside in Girard, which would not allow for personal service.

**What long-term care services, assisted living or nursing facilities exist in the community?**

- a. Girard had the Medicalodges Girard for the long-term health services and also have home health service, which is important in all communities.
- b. Drove past Medical Lodges facility and assisted/independent living called West Ridge. In most Kansas towns we're hanging on to some older facilities and making necessary improvements to keep costs down. Would be nice to have newer facilities but understand the economic impact. However creative minds on local Boards are using residential house to add much needed living spaces for seniors.
- c. The West Ridge Assisted living facility looked very nice and up to date. The other nursing home also appeared in good shape, just not as new. The assisted living's proximity to the hospital was also a bonus.
- d. The nursing home and assisted living areas appeared to be well taken care of.

## 7. Housing

**Give a brief description of the existing mix of housing stock. Does the local market have housing that would appeal to all income wages? What challenges do you see in regards to finding acceptable housing? (Neighborhoods, size, properties for sale, etc.)**

- a. It did not appear that there was an overabundance of housing on the market. On Zillow there are not a lot of listings and it looks like they are lacking housing in the mid-price range. We did notice a new housing development going in on the east side of town. This housing appears to provide mid-price housing options. Good for Girard for recognizing the need for affordable housing and developing this area.
- b. The market looks slim especially since real estate mortgages are so reasonable and it is a buyer's market. I like the 10-year tax abatement of all taxing entities if you buy and remodel an existing property. Probably the most aggressive program I've seen to persuade the owners to invest and improve.
- c. There were several homes for sale in the under \$100,000 and the \$100,000- \$200,000 categories, but very few high-end homes for sale. Several of the homes appeared to have been on the market a while, making me question the quality of those homes or strength of the market. There were a few homes on the south side of town that were very rundown, which would drive down the appeal of that particular neighborhood.
- d. The housing market appeared to be very limited. We saw very few realty signs and even fewer for rent signs. New housing for an average family was in progress.

**What kind of rental properties did you observe for persons interested in building or simply living in the community prior to buying housing?**

- a. Zillow does not have listings for rentals in Girard. We did not notice any rental properties or any apartment complexes that provided rental housing
- b. Very limited rentals available, would make sense as many renting, could have had houses sold out from under them in a bullish buying market. I didn't notice apartments above retail buildings downtown, might be a possibility. Looked like adequate in fill building possibilities, several opportunities for larger homes on acreage. Overall housing in the community looked good.
- c. Rental properties in the area were difficult to find. In an internet search, I could only find one apartment building and no single family homes listed. While I am sure there are more rentals than this, I think it would be useful to have some kind of rental directory online or if more places used listing sites such as Zillow.
- d. The only rental property I found was an apartment house that was in an older residential area.

## 8. Schools

**What schools are present? Do the schools appear to be adequate in size or do you see the use of temporary classrooms? Are the buildings and grounds well-maintained?**

- a. Girard offers Preschool, K-8 and High School educations. They are in close proximity to Pittsburg State University for Post-Secondary education. The schools have good facilities and seem to be adequate in size. They were neat in appearance and well maintained. It was very easy to access the schools for someone coming to sporting events for the first time in Girard.
- b. Income-adjusted Head Start available, preschool available both private and public, K-8 and high school all looked good, facilities above average, alternative school and physical fitness training center located in industrial part. School population is declining so current facilities more than fit attendance. The high school testing results are declining. Would be concerned in education delivered.
- c. Schools appeared to be in very good shape. Parking at the gym looked like it could be a challenge as the parking lot was in the back and there was only street parking out front. Buildings and grounds overall were in good shape. I was very impressed with the community's support of the schools- there were signs everywhere in support of the schools.
- d. The schools appeared to be outstanding, well taken care, and money has been allocated for the upkeep. The community pride really shined. The elementary school appeared to have a traffic problem in releasing the children to go home. Cars were lined up for several blocks in the street waiting for the release of the children.

**Were you able to find online information in the community that helped assess the quality of the educational system?**

- a. The school's website does a good job of displaying the quality of their education. They have several resources on the site that shows their emphasis on education. The Girard site also has a link to the school's website.
- b. The school system testing shows a proficiency in math is 15-19% which is lower than state average of 33%. Reading/language arts is 20-24% lower than Kansas average of 37%. Girard High placed in the bottom 50% of all schools in Kansas for overall test scores. Teachers in class above state average.
- c. The school's website was very helpful. I thought the middle school newsletter was very interesting and did a great job of highlighting what was going on. I also found it interesting they used Canvas infrastructure for their online work, as many colleges use this. As listed on the site, many teachers had degrees beyond that of a bachelor's degree. Overall the school program appeared to be of high quality.
- d. Numerous charts and graphs are available to the public showing the quality of the schools.



## **9. Childcare**

### **What childcare services are available? Is it affordable?**

- a. According to Google there are three childcare facilities available in Girard. I did not get any information on their affordability.
- b. Childcare is available, but limited. Did not find any cost information. Schools across the state taking a second look at childcare, as parents are searching for ways to work and have quality childcare. It's very important to growth in the community to expand childcare services.
- c. The school and a few other businesses provided pre-school education, but it was difficult to find information online or from exploring the town regarding daycare.
- d. Could not validate information on childcare other than asking whether it's a problem, with the response being no. No daycare is provided by the school, other than for those children with special needs.

## **10. Faith/Religion**

### **Comment on the number of denominations and the physical appearance of the faith communities represented in the community. Did you observe any evidence of faith-based community services?**

- a. Girard offers several denominations of churches in their community. We were able to observe several of the churches and they had very good physical appearances and were welcoming to any one new to the community.
- b. The Church community in Girard seems to be strong. Newest facility looked like Methodist Church and Trinity Lutheran. The churches all seem to have pantry help for the needy and meal services for needy in some cases.
- c. There were many churches and many had great signs making it easy to find them. There was a food pantry on the corner of the square, which I thought showed the community cared for their less fortunate members.
- d. The majority of the churches appeared to be very becoming and welcoming. It was nice to hear of the ministerial alliance being organized and available for families in need.

## **11. Civic**

### **Tell about the variety of nonprofit organizations and clubs within the community. Did you observe any evidence of civic organization activity?**

- a. I did not find any information about organizations or clubs, but I can tell they are actively there. This community has a lot of spirit and pride which comes from a lot of community involvement. I did not notice specific civic activity.
- b. The Lions and Masons presence were only national groups observed. Many non-profit activities with smaller ad hoc groups, one with Covid grant to feed the public, in the last

few months. Overall all impression is that Girard takes care of their less fortunate. Civic Group activity: Food distribution in downtown. Second hand clothing just west of church museum.

- c. From the City's website, there appeared to be many clubs/organizations to promote the community including a Celebrate Girard Group and a Girard Area Community Foundation.
- d. Numerous signs were posted throughout the town indicating special events which were organized by the clubs. Lions Club and Masons had organized activities to be held in the near future. Individuals were being served free lunch on a first come first serve basis that was arranged by the city and volunteer groups.

## **12. Public Infrastructure**

**Comment in general on the streets, street signage, sidewalks, parking, lighting, restrooms, landscaping, and streetscapes in areas other than downtown.**

- a. The streets and sidewalks were in good condition throughout the whole town. My favorite aspect of the infrastructure was the street signs. They made finding things in town easier.
- b. Overall sidewalks seem to be designed to connect schools on major streets, limited sidewalks in residential areas. Streets that I observed were above average, limited parking near City Museum, maybe angle parking on north side. Did not see a public restroom area. Limited street scape outside courthouse area.
- c. City Hall was closed on our visit (government holiday).
- d. The areas away from the square have sufficient parking, however they are spread out enough that you would not walk from one place to the other. We did not notice any public restrooms marked for visitors. We noticed the city is not totally running LED lighting. The street signs were nice, but the street department might need to take a look at Magnolia and Summit as the gutter covering needs some attention. A few street signs in the residential section need some help. At the city electric department spools of wire were left in front of the build inviting crime and are unsightly. A better placement would be inside locked fencing.

**Comment on city/town hall (How were you received? Was there information about the town available?)**

- a. Due to COVID we were unable to visit City Hall.
- b. City Hall was closed due to Covid, but employee came to door, gave me cards of administrator and city clerk, referred me to Chamber of Commerce office. Jessica Ripper, Executive Director, took time out of her busy schedule, to provide dialogue on town, provide maps, information, and welcome packet to explore Girard.

- c. City Hall was closed on our visit (government holiday).
- d. The Chamber of Commerce has an extremely nice and knowledgeable director that truly cares for the community. The Mayor also has the city of Girard in his best interest. The two offices appear to work together as a team for the betterment of the community. The brochures, literature and Welcome Guide were very useful and very professional. I hope these were printed at a local printing shop, but if so, it was not made known.

**Police/fire protection:**

- a. Has link from City Website, but we did not gain first-hand knowledge of the Police and Fire Departments in Girard.
- b. City provided Police and Fire Protection looked to be up to date equipment.
- c. The police department's buildings when you come into town from the west were impressive. They were new and well kept.
- d. The fire department operates with two fulltime employees with the help of volunteer fire fighters.

**Library:**

- a. The Library was closed at the time of our visit. We were able to drive by, and it appeared to be a very nice Library. According to the website it has a lot of services that would be beneficial to the community.
- b. Was closed on the Friday, I was in town. Did get review of the expansion and original building with material and discussion from Chamber.
- c. The Library appeared well kept, however its location in the middle of town would make it easy to miss for people just visiting.
- d. We were unable to visit the library even though it was the middle of the afternoon on a Friday. The doors were locked so we could only view the historic building and newer addition, which were complimentary to each other. We enjoyed the rock garden and cute sidewalk. I was a little disappointed I could not view the "Little Blue Books" or the "Appeal to Reason" which is vital to the history of this community.

**City parks (walking tracks, ballparks, playgrounds, sportsplex)**

- a. Girard has a swimming pool, golf course and playground. All of these things are desirable for someone moving to the community.
- b. Observed the sports complex and school fields. Noticed walkers at Crawford County Fairgrounds east of town. Nice 9-hole golf course, would recommend signage to advertise course.

- c. The parks and playgrounds were not on the main streets, so signs pointing to where they are may be helpful.
- d. For all the money available to the school, I was disappointed in parks being available for children. Only viewed one small city park, a basketball/skateboard park, several memorial parks, and limited walking trails. The school has a magnificent indoor sports complex and work is in progress to put artificial turf on the baseball field. Young children are limited on what's available from my perspective.

### **13. Recreation/Tourism**

**Is the community well-known for any particular attraction or event? Do they have a community slogan that capitalizes on that asset?**

- a. None that we were aware of at the time of the visit.
- b. The Chamber letterhead has a picture of a deer depicting how they were founded by Dr. Charles Strong. A Girard coffee table book proclaims Girard, A Great Place to Call Home.
- c. I didn't notice any slogan around town, but everyone was appeared to be very supportive of the sports teams, so I would assume the town is very invested in watching their high school athletes.
- d. The deer head represents the history of the town. I find it very unfortunate that the utility companies located their electrical transformer and gas valves in the same location as the deer statue.

**Did you see any indication of significant events taking place in the community that would be of interest to both visitors and residents?**

- a. They had a Trunk or Treat in October and will be having a Christmas festival in December.
- b. Ladies night out – 300 last year  
Golf tournament – fundraiser for Chamber  
Fall Festival – Homecoming – BBQ Cook-off, beer garden, and parade  
Easter celebration activities  
First Friday Events  
4th of July celebration  
Christmas Festival of Trees, 5th of December with pancake feed and Santa bingo
- c. The shops we visited both talked about a girl's night out event. It sounded like they had a lot of participation and that the event would be a great time for visitors and locals. I also noticed that the county fair grounds were located in Girard, so I am sure this event pulls people from all over.
- d. We did not see any events being planned; however, we were in the middle of a pandemic.

**Elaborate on any significant natural or manmade features that have the potential of drawing people to the community.** (Public art, museums, lakes, campgrounds, regional heritage locations).

- a. Some of the top things to do on Trip Advisor is to visit St. Aloysius Church Historic Site, The Vietnam War Memorial and the Girard History Museum. One place I would like to go back and visit is the Courthouse. It had unique character.
- b. The public has a couple downtown murals, the Girard Museum in the old stone church is a simple but very informative center for Girard history. Greenbush west of town should be a draw for Girard. The Madison House seems to be only overnight stay, but inviting. Only camping areas observed were at fairgrounds.
- c. The artwork on some of the buildings was beautiful! The artwork dressed up the town and kept made the town appear more modern and trendy.
- d. The Courthouse is majestic; totally awesome. Tours could be provided upon request. The officers at check in did not seem to have much knowledge of the history of the building.

**Is there an obvious visitor's center, chamber of commerce office, main street office, or other facility that serves the needs of visitors? Comment on the staff, facilities, signage, visibility, etc.**

- a. Girard has a Chamber of Commerce office; however, we were unable to contact the day of our visit.
- b. The Girard Chamber of Commerce is located near the square and has a great Executive Director in Jessica Ripper, young and excited to promote Girard. Great handouts and web information, lots of activities and promotion here.
- c. We visited on a government holiday, so we did not visit the Chamber.
- d. The stone Girard signs are very attractive and the city offices are in a nice location to the city square. The Post Office is not marked at all other than a temporary sign on the railing.

**Are there any restaurants, specialty shops or attractions that would bring you back to this community in the near future?**

- a. There was some variety to choose from, but we chose to eat at Eastside Diner. The food and service were excellent. People in the restaurant were friendly, even though they didn't know who we were. Definitely would be a "do again." The two shops that would definitely bring me back to the community were the Painted Barrels and the Pearls and Boutique. They were very fun and the ladies at each store were very welcoming and excited to share about their community. They also did a great job of promoting other businesses.

- b. I didn't get to experience Chicken Annie's, but would come back to eat there. The Painted Barrel is definitely a come-back retail spot. I would come back to see the Carnegie so glad they saved it and added on.
- c. I loved the Painted Barrel and Pearls and Curls store. If I was in the area, I would definitely stop in. They carried a wide variety of merchandise and prices were reasonable.
- d. Your community has a certain charm that would make an enjoyable day trip. The unique jewelry store that works on grandfather clocks is what I will be coming back to. I feel the jeweler's talent of working on these clocks could be publicized to bring others to your area for this lost service.

#### **14. Wrap-up**

##### **What are the most positive things you observed about the community?**

- a. This town was a very nice clean town. Businesses and services were all very easily accessible. I also like how the town has kept businesses in the downtown area. It was very enjoyable to visit. The people were super friendly and helpful. I would be very proud to be a part of this community and a community I would consider living in.
- b. Great community support for schools from business community. (Turf paid for by businesses in school facilities.) The Courthouse Square landscaping and streetscape around is an inviting area. Small shops springing up on square are an asset to draw to downtown. The community is clean, friendly, and with good leadership from city, businesses, and residents will be successful into the future.
- c. I really liked the trendy shops located in the downtown area. Having all these businesses compacted in the town square made everything easy to find and get to. I thought it was very neat how everyone appeared to have pride in the high school. The hospital appeared to be top notch.
- d. The town square is such a pleasant place and should be appreciated. The shopping available is very unique to a town of this size. The Courthouse is such an asset that I don't feel the community appreciates for its true beauty and its history. We truly enjoyed the time we spent getting to know Girard.

##### **What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?**

- a. Probably one of the biggest challenges I could see for the community is housing. It didn't appear to have a lot of affordable housing available. The community is addressing this issue by the new housing development.
- b. My biggest concern was quality of education being received based on testing. I have a real concern in downtown square of the empty building lots. How can you entice the owners to sell and make these usable business or recreation sites? Can they be long-

term leased, would a public hearing discussing the sites be helpful. Would a brainstorming session be helpful with telephone co, banks and community lenders to purchase? The sign by the jail needs to come down, maybe your aluminum fabrication company can design a sign board to place Lions, Lodge, 4-H on a favorable image sign.

- c. I think one challenge this community will face will be attracting industry (large scale jobs). The only place there appeared to be for industry to grow was the south side, which was al- ready run down.
- d. I did not see any source of public transportation. Transportation could be beneficial for all ages. Housing appears to be in desperate need. Girard relies upon the city of Pittsburg for numerous services.

**What will you remember most about this community six month from now (positive or negative)?**

- a. I will remember most how welcoming people were to us and how much we enjoyed the downtown. They had a fun variety of little shops and some good eating options. Our visit gave us a wonderful impression of Girard, and we will look forward to visiting again someday!!
- b. I want to return in six months to see improvement on the building south of Painted Barrels. It's amazing all taxing units went along with a 10-year tax abatement to remodel or build new structures, great program bound to improve the quality of housing inventory. It is so tough to be located close to a larger college town and develop a sustainable retail or niche shopping area. You have some great retailers just have to support locals first to survive. Thanks for the opportunity to visit and observe. We all have assets and liabilities, we need to keep focused on positive outcomes involving as many as possible 4-H, Scouts, schools, churches, farm families, local businesses, Masonic Lodge, Knights of Columbus, Lions, and so on. The more the kids are involved the bigger the crowds and interest to support community activities.
- c. I will remember how well kept and friendly the storekeepers where in the businesses we visited. Everyone was so excited to talk about their products and help us find what we needed. They were also so supportive of one another with each recommending we visited the others.
- d. The community pride that was presented to us. The historical courthouse that was worth the trip on its own. The biggest disappointment was the utilities at the corner of the square that showcased the deer monument. I still can't believe the city allowed this location to be used for utilities.

**PowerPoint Presentation is posted at:**

<http://www.ksre.k-state.edu/community/civic-engagement/first-impressions/index.html>

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